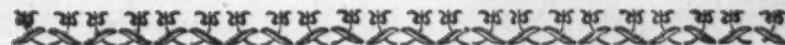


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CORNELIUS his Memorial of Prayer,
and Alms set forth.



A

S E R M O N,

PREACH'D BEFORE

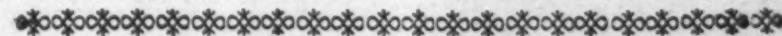
The *Wiltshire* SOCIETY,

At St. PETER's CHURCH,

I N T H E

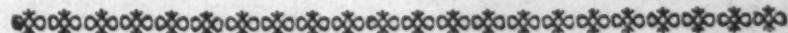
C I T Y of *B R I S T O L*,

On the 26th of AUGUST, 1756.



By JOSEPH HORLER, A. B.

Vicar of Stapleford in *Wiltshire*, and School-Master of *Wilton*.



Publish'd at the Request of the SOCIETY.



B R I S T O L:

Printed and sold by S. FARLEY, in *Castle-Green*; by T. CADDELL, and J. PALMER, in *Wine-Street*; and by J. WILSON, in *Peter's-Street*, Booksellers.



To my very Good FRIENDS,
Mr. HENRY GARDNER,
PRESIDENT,
THE
ASSISTANTS,
AND
The other WORTHY MEMBERS
OF THE
Wiltshire SOCIETY:
THIS SERMON,
Publish'd at their joint Request,
Is HUMBLY INSCRIBED,
By their affectionate Friend,
And COUNTRYMAN,
JOSEPH HORLER.





ACTS, x. 4. Latter Part.

*Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come
up for a Memorial before GOD.*

 HIS is that surprizing, but gracious Salutation, with which the Angel accosted *Cornelius*, being dispatch'd from above on that Errand. *Cornelius* was a devout Man, and feared GOD with all his House.

THE Masters Example is catching, and runs through the whole Family, and as is the Head such will the Body be. They, who are truly influenced by GOD's blessed Spirit, cannot wholly take up with Speculation alone, nor content themselves barely with wishing, and willing. Good Thoughts naturally kindle into good Desires, which imperceptably form into good Designs, till at last they break out into good Deeds, which discover themselves unprompted in Acts of Piety towards GOD, and Charity towards Men. By that Term a devout Man, the Jews

Jews generally understood One, that was proselyted to their Law, a Convert from Heathenism to Judaism, and so far, a Worshipper of the True GOD, the GOD of Israel. And such was *Cornelius*, a Proselyte of the Gate, or second Order, who tho' for want of Circumcision, he was not admissible into the Temple, made his Approaches towards it, as far as it was lawful, embrac'd the Privilege of being admitted so near as the Entrance, and miss'd no Opportunity of joining with them at the stated Hours of Prayer. This gave him the Character of a just Man, one that feared GOD, and of good Report among all the Nation of the Jews.

SUCH an Assemblage of Virtues united in one Person, could not but engage the peculiar Attention, and immediate Care of the Almighty. The Sons of Virtue are the Sons of GOD: And tho' they may not always be the most prosperous and flourishing in this Life, are nevertheless the Darlings and Favourites of Heaven. He will give his Angels Charge concerning them.—These blessed Spirits always stand in his Presence, and perpetually surround his Throne, waiting his Pleasure and ready to execute his Commands. They are all ministering Spirits; and never better employ'd *below*, than when sent forth to minister unto them who shall be Heirs of Salvation. These they esteem

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at present as fellow Labourers in promoting the same Work (*i. e.*) the Glory of our common Father, which is in Heaven ; and as future Partners in Bliss, where they are to be joint Companions, in perpetuating the wondrous Theme. They look on us with a fond and affectionate Eye, as being near of kin on the one side, (*i. e.*) no less than half Brothers, and with an Eye of tenderness and compassion on the other Half, pitying the Infirmities and Struggles of the Flesh with the Spirit, kindly aiding and assisting the Soul against the Body, facilitating her Conquest, and joining in the Triumph over Her. ^a *GOD looked down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to behold, and see, if there were any that would understand, and seek after GOD.* Where eminent above the Rest, for Virtue, and ^b *higher than any of the People,* like *Saul the Son of Kish, from his Shoulders and upward* appeared *Cornelius,* a Man of so pious a turn of Mind, as to make it his constant study and employ to search and feel after GOD, if happily He might find him, and from a deep Sense of Duty to the Supreme Being, laid out his whole Self and Substance in giving much *Alms* to the People, and *praying to GOD always.* As *Cornelius* merely by the Light of Nature, improv'd by his own Inquiries, and familiar Converse amongst the Jews had made such Advances

^a *Psalm liii, 3.*^b *1 Sam. x. 23.*

Advances in Religion, as to discover, and forsake the Errors of Gentilism, and to renounce Idolatry, and Polytheism for the Worship of the true God, it seem'd Good to the Divine Wisdom to lend him all necessary Aid for his greater furtherance and improvement therein, to send forth his *Light*, and his *Truth* to be his *Guide*, and to lead him in the *Way everlasting*. Neither truly was it consistent with God's great Goodness and Philanthropy to hide his Face forever from one who sought it with his whole Heart, nor to suffer him any longer to grope out his *Way* in Darkness and Ignorance, the Desire of whose Soul was to his Name, and to the frequent Remembrance of Him.

THE Almighty therefore singled him out as a chosen Vessel from the rest, by whom to magnify his Word, and his Truth, above all Things, to display his especial Providence, and Care over the Righteous, and to let the admiring World behold and see his Children as much distinguish'd for their *Reward* as for their *Merit*. Notwithstanding those great Attainments already made in every Virtue, and that good Report among all the Nation of the Jews consequent upon it, which was as high as human Nature or Reputation could go; One Thing was yet needful, to compleat him in his private Capacity, to ripen him thoroughly, and make him yet fitter for

for Heaven. He had seemingly acquir'd a competent Knowledge of the only true GOD, but knew nothing of *Jesus Christ* whom he had sent.

THAT nothing therefore might be wanting on GOD's Part towards enlightening his Understanding, and making up that Deficiency, he vouchsafes to send down an Angel express from Heaven on that Errand, who was previously to acquaint him, by way of present approbation and future encouragement, *That his Prayers and his Alms were come up as a Memorial before GOD*, and to direct him withal where to apply for further Instructions, what he ought to do. This may properly be call'd the Devout Man's Sacrifice, for so the Word render'd Memorial implies, E. G. *The Priest shall take from the Meat Offering a Memorial thereof, and burn it upon the Altar, it is an Offering made by Fire, of sweet Savour unto the LORD.* And this is favoured by the Expression come up or ascend, *viz.* as the Smoke from the Altar. To this Purpose the Psalmist ^a *Let my Prayer be set forth in thy Sight as the Incense, and let the lifting up of my Hands be an Evening Sacrifice.* Thus the Author to the *Hebrews* exhorts, ^c *Let us offer to GOD the Sacrifice of Praise continually giving Thanks to his Name.* And

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St. Paul to the *Philippians*, calls the Things which they sent him by the Hands of *Epa-phroditus* *an Odour of a sweet Smell, a Sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to GOD.* This Sacrifice, you may observe, consists of two Parts, *viz.* First *Prayer* and Secondly *Alms*, Twin Sisters from the same common Parents, (*i. e.*) the Faith and Fear of GOD.

HE that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, *i. e.* must fully be persuaded in his own Mind, that there is such a *Being* or *Existence*, and that he is a *Rewarer* of them that diligently seek him as to his *essence*. To offer Sacrifice upon any other Supposition is a downright Absurdity and Self-contradiction. If there be no GOD, we acknowledge 'a Non-entity, an unexisting Existence: And if he be not the Rewarder of them that seek him, it will be the same Thing with respect to us, as if there was *none*, seeing that we might as well *seek him not*, as *seek him*.

WHEN these two Points are thoroughly settled in the Affirmative, *Faith* will prompt us to make our *Approaches* to him to direct our Prayers unto him, and to look up, in hope, and humble Expectation of this Reward; and *Fear* will make us ever cautious of offending him, and quicken our Diligence in

in the Search, lest through our own Remissness, we should fall short of it. Now Prayer in general may be defin'd to be *a pious and affectionate Address of the Heart and Soul to God*, from a Consciousnes of our own Weakness, many Wants and Infirmities, and a due Sense of the Divine Majesty, and his all Sufficiency to succour and relieve them. And this Definition extends to all, and every Species of Prayer, whether publick or private, familiar, or in the Closet. As GOD is in himself a Being of such transcendent Majesty and Glory as to surpasse every Thing that the Heart of Man can conceive; so may he upon that Account alone expect every Act of acknowledgment and submission from all inferior Beings, whose Natures are at an infinite distance from his own. And as he is moreover the Author of all Being, the various Orders of Angels, as well as Men, and all sublunary Existences, and the *Preserver*, as well as *Creator* of them: So does he, demand a Tribute of Adoration and Praife from every Individual, in Strains more or less exalted, according as they *rise*, or *fall* in the Scale of Beings. The former of these may be consider'd as a *Duty*; the latter as a *Debt*.

ANGELS and Men, who are best qualifed for this glorious Task, have Obligations equal to their Abilities. And accordingly

it is the constant Employment of the former to hymn the Throne of God Day and Night and invite us to imitate them, as far as the diminutive Perfection of our Nature will permit ; that his Will might *be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

THESE purer æthereal Beings are in so fix'd and confirm'd a State of *Grace*, and *Felicity*, as to be past all Probation or Petition. *Fulness of Joy and Pleasures for ever more* are already their Possession, and the *Lot of their Inheritance*, from which there is no Danger of their Fall, or Deprivation, either thro' inward Infirmitiy, or outward Surprize.

BUT with Man who is of a *middle Nature* between Angel, and Brute, a Compound of *matter* and *Spirit*, the Case is far otherwise. He sets out upon very unequal Terms, with none of those Advantages, which those blessed Spirits enjoy. His *Task* is much harder than theirs, and his *Abilities* to perform it, much *less*. He is already a laps'd, a fallen Creature, and through that still more liable to fall ; of so flux and uncertain a Condition, that his Being must be renewed Day by Day, or he must soon cease to be at all. He is all *Want*, all *Infirmitiy*, and therefore should be all *Petition*, all *Prayer*. So long as he is in this State of Probation, he

he is secure neither of present, nor future Happiness. Bodily Wants and Infirmities dash in upon and imbitter the one, and spiritual Enemies on every Side invade and endanger the other. The World therefore may not unaptly be compared to the wide Ocean, over which, his whole Life is but one continued Voyage, where he is hourly exposed to Storm, and Tempest, and all the Perils of the Main, and liable every Moment to be wreck'd, swallowed up and lost in the briny Deep; unless it should please *Omniscience* to be his Pilot, to remove every Rock and fill every Sail with propitious Gales, and so to guide the Helm and steer the Vessel, that she may at length arrive in safety, *at the Haven where she would be.*

ON the good or bad Success of this Voyage, our *All*, our Soul and Body and the Happiness or Misery of both depend.

IN a Case therefore of so much Difficulty and Danger, how much does it concern us to implore the divine Mercy, not to leave us to ourselves, and the Errors of our own Misconduct, to call in the Almighty's Aid by frequent and importunate Prayer, that he would strengthen us to surmount the one, and guide us to avoid the other. *Without him we can do nothing, but we can do all Things, through our GOD that helpeth us,* When we have

have prov'd all Things else, and found the Vanity and Insufficiency of human Means, his *Grace is sufficient for us, his Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* To whom then in all our Dangers should we fly for Succour, but to thee O **LORD**, who art able and willing to save all those, that come to thee, to the uttermost ?

EARLY therefore will we direct our Prayer unto him, and will look up. There is no fear of a Repulse from him who is always more ready to hear than we to pray, and is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve. No Time is unseasonable to him, who never *slumbreth nor sleepeth* : No Place unacceptable to him, who filleth *Heaven and Earth* with his Presence. What comfortable Assurances are these ? What kind Encouragements are they for us to apply to the Throne of Grace, where no Petitions, duly qualified, shall be rejected, but the meanest as well as the greatest of the Children of Men shall not only gain Admittance, but Acceptance. *Call upon me, says he, in the Time of Trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me.* When our Necessities are most *preffing*, so are his Invitations to call upon him ; and our Petitions shall be crown'd with Success, *equal* to that Fervency with which we offer them up. Our Duty and our Interest are blended so inseparably, that we best promote the one by

by the Performance of the other ; and we never serve ourselves so effectually, as when we are most zealous in the Service of GOD. *Let us praise him therefore with joyful Lips, and tell of his Salvation from Day to Day.* Thus should we most happily divide our Time between Prayer and Praise. Prayer for what we want, and Praise for what we have. Our Saviour himself has taught us, thus to address our Father which is in Heavon, (*i. e.*) to begin with a Petition and end with a Doxology. And how can we approach him with a better Prospect of Success, than when we pray in that *Form*, and in those Words which himself hath taught us when we *pray* to say. Many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss. But there can be no Danger of failing here either as to the *Matter* or *Form*. Here is nothing *redundant* or *superfluous* : Nothing *wanting*, or *deficient*. When therefore we set about so holy an Exercise, as that of Prayer, our first Request to GOD, should be that of our Saviours Disciples to him, viz. Lord *teach us to Pray*. Let the Words of my Mouth, and the Meditation of my Heart be always acceptable in thy Sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.

THUS should we approach him with that Frame and Temper of Mind, which befits wretched and miserable Sinners, when falling low at his Footstool, to supplicate the Divine

vine Majesty, that he would be merciful unto us, and forgive us our Sins *past*, and for the future save and defend us in all Dangers *ghostly* and *bodily*, that he would not *lead* us into *Temptation*, but *deliver* us from *Evil*: That he being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass thro' Things *Temporal*, as finally not to lose the Things that are *Eternal*.

EVERY good, and every perfect Gift is from above; and cometh down from the Father of Lights. From him all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do Proceed. He, and he *only* knows, what is best fitting for us to *ask*, and him to *grant*. The Gift of Prayer itself therefore, is to be reckoned amongst the Especial ones of Divine Grace. He first inclineth their Hearts, and then his Ear hearkneth thereto. He must help to cleanse our Hands, and purify our Hearts, before we shall be worthy to offer him any Sacrifice. I will wash mine Hands in Innocency says *David*, and so will I go to thine Altar. The Prince of Poets therefore has preferr'd the *Dove* which is the Emblem of Meekness, and Innocence, to the Honour of bringing *Ambrosia* to *Jupiter*. Without these Requisites first had, and obtain'd, we shall offer the sacrifice of Fools. As is the giver so is the Gift, and as is the Intention so is the Acceptance. We therefore do well to begin our Communion Service in joining his Omnipotence to his Omnipotence.

Omnipotence. As he is a God ; “ to whom all Hearts be open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid,” and in Consequence of both beseeching him, “ to cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts, by the Inspiration of his holy Spirit,” to the intent that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy Name. When the *lifting* up of our Hands, is *thus* attended with the *lifting* up of our Hearts, we offer unto the **LORD** a Sacrifice, better pleasing than a *Bullock*, that hath *Horns* and *Hoofs*.

BUT *this* is but *one* Part of *Cornelius* his Memorial, there is *another* yet behind, not *less* material, without which the *former* is mutilated, and imperfect. The Angel, if you remember right, does not tell *Cornelius*, that his *Prayers* alone, were come up for a Memorial before **God**, but thy *Prayers* and thine *Alms*, not separately but conjunctly. Neither *Prayers*, nor *Alms* alone, but every Thing in its own Order; first *Prayer*, and then *Alms*. The *one* paves the Way for the *other*, and as it were Ushers *it* into the Divine Presence. Prayer more aptly disposes the Mind for Alms giving, and the Almighty the better to accept it. *Alms* unless introduced by *Prayer* favour more of Vanity and Ostentation, than true Charity; and Works of *Piety*, unless seconded by *Alms* giving, are but superficial, Pharisaical Pre-

tences. Therefore says the **LORD**, I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice. All legal Oblations, are no longer useful and availing, since Christ our Passover is sacrificed for *us*: And the unbloody Sacrifice instituted in their Room has swallow'd 'em up, and superseded them forever. He has releas'd us for the *future* from all costly, and expensive Sacrifices, that we may have the more to give to him, that needeth. He first compounds the whole Debt that we owe him; tho' a mighty Sum, for the minutest Part, a slender Acknowledgment, and then transfers it from himself to our poor Brother, whose *Receipt* is to be our *Acquittance*.

A Morsel thus bestow'd upon the Hungry, shall discharge us, from the first Fruits, of our Corn and Wine. A cast *Garment* to cloath the Naked from either extream of Weather, shall suffice for the *fleecy* Product of our Flocks; and a single *Joint* to a distressed Widow, and her starvling little Ones shall set off for whole burnt Offerings of Calves of a Year old. *Prayers* unless thus accompanied by *Alms*, are but as *Leaves* without *Fruit*, which being wither'd and dry, are snatch'd up by the first Blast, born this Way and that by the sportive Winds thro' the empty Air, and arrested in their upward Flight, so as never to reach the Throne of **God**. By their *Fruits ye shall know them*, says our Saviour, and

and not by their *Leaves*. *Alms* are the *Fruit*, by which it shall be known, of what species, or kind the *Tree* is. *Every Tree is known by its own Fruit*. To be *barren* is well nigh unto a *Curse*. True *Piety* is seated in the *Heart*, and not in the *Tongue* and is as inseparable from *Charity* as *Water* from its *Fountain*. *Works of Beneficence* must proceed from *this Principle*: If genuine and sincere; must be done in *Gods Name*, and for his *Sake*, or they will want of their *Value* and *Currency* with him. They will neither stand the *Trial of the Scale*, nor the *Touchstone*, but upon the first *Essay* will be found wanting, both as to their *Weight* and *Purity*, and as such will be rejected by him, tho' they should bear his *own Image and Superscription*. But why should the *Head*, made of *fine Gold*, be debased with^s *Feet of miry Clay* for its *Supporters*? Why should *old Cloth* be put upon a *new Garment*? Or *Embroidery* be bestow'd on *Rags*? Why should that, which was *sown in Glory*, sink in *dishonour*? Or *Works*, begun in *Piety* towards *God*, fall short in *Acts of Charity* towards *Men*? What avails it to *begin well*, and leave the *Work half finish'd*? *God will not be serv'd by Halves*. Will not be put off with mere wordy *Professions*, nor accept of a *corrupt Thing*, when we have a *Male* in our *Flock*.

When Araunah the Jebusite offer'd unto David Oxen for burnt Sacrifice, and threshing Instruments, and other Instruments of the Oxen for Wood, David as a King rejected the Kingly Gift ; and said, *Nay but I will buy it of thee at a Price ; neither will I offer burnt Offerings unto the LORD of that, which shall cost me nothing.*

MANY would be more exemplary for Charity than they are, was it not for the Expence of it.

WOULD the *Calves* of their *Lips* commute for *Calves* of a *Year old*, who would be so full of *good Works and Alms Deeds* as they ? Were *Colleges* to be founded and *Hospitals* endowed by the *Effusion* of many *Words*, and the *Efficacy* of *Prayer* alone, no *Structures* would be so pompous and magnificent as theirs, who would not part with the least of their *Substance* either towards the *Foundation*, or the *Endowment*. These would chearfully come before the *LORD*, with thousands of *Rams*, and *Rivers of Oil*, could they but find the former, like *Abrahams*, ready caught by the *Horns* ; and the latter like *Moses*, by *smiting the stony Rock*, so that it might *gush out like Water* ; and *Streams* flow *withal*. A like *Vein* of *Charity* would flow towards their *Neighbour* with that of their *Piety* towards *God*, viz. They would fill the *Hungry* with *good*

good Things could they but prepare a Table for them in the Desert, but would not suffer them to come nigh their Dwellings, unless it would rain *Manna*, and *Quails* from Heaven for their *Subsistence*. They would scarce go to the Expence of *five* Barley Loaves and *two* small Fishes, tho' to feed *five* thousand Men, besides Women and Children at one Time, unless for the Sake of the twelve Baskets of Fragments that *remain'd over and above to them that had eaten*. Such Benefactors in *Word* but not in *Deed*, would neither profit themselves nor others, though they could speak *with the Tongues of Men and of Angels*. Seeing that the *Poor* and *Rich* would be sent alike *empty* away, when feasted only with sounding *Brass*, or a *tinkling Cymbal*.

BUT be not deceived, GOD is not mocked. Of *whatsoever a Man soweth*, of *that shall he reap*. He that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption. Shew me thy *Piety* therefore without thy *Works*, and I will shew thee my *Piety* by my *Works*. For as the *Body without the Spirit is dead*; so *Piety without Charity is dead also*. *Charity* then is the *Spirit*, which must *enliven Piety*, and when thus united, they take *Wing* and ascend up to *Heaven*, like *Manoah's Angel* in the *Flame* of the *Altar*, from whence we may see him by the *Eye of Faith*, as it were, returning with the same *Divine Approbation*, with that

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of *Cornelius*, viz. *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before GOD.*

So far then my Friends and Brethren all is well, (*i. e.*) we have made a good Beginning. *A Jove Principium.*

We have begun with GOD, from whence all our Beginnings ought to commence. Under such Auspices, we cannot fail of making an happy Progres, and bringing Things to a prosperous Issue. Prosper thou O LORD, the Work of our Hands upon us, O prosper thou our handy Work.

WE are well met once more, Gentlemen, Natives of Wilts, from different, and widely divided Towns and Fields and all the Region round about Avon, and are come up with our Tribes, and our little Ones in solemn Proceßion to the House of our GOD, which is call'd the *House of Prayer*, where, it is to be hop'd, we have all join'd in offering up our Supplications in *such* wise, as becomes a Christian Assembly conven'd for that Purpose, that GOD *may be in the midst of us.* More especially as *this* is professedly our Feast of Charity, let there be no Spots, I beseech you Brethren, to stain or defile it. To act uncharitably in any Sense, on such an Occasion as *this* would be to act absurdly, and horridly out of Character, as it would not only *frustrate*, but *pervert* the very Intention of our Meeting, and prove but a bad Ending to so good a Beginning.

BETTER

BETTER for us not to have assembled at all, than not to answer the Design of our Assembly, seeing that St. Paul's Reproach to the *Corinthians*^h in a similar Case would be ours, (i. e.) *We should have come together not for the better but for the worse.* It had been more prudent not to have approach'd the LORD in Prayer for his Blessing on our Undertakings; for if they have proceeded *out of feigned Lips*, they will not only be unavailing, but turned into Sin. *In vain doth the Trumpet sound to Battle, if it doth not animate the Soldiery to the Charge.* The finest Harangues upon Bravery are thrown away, and spent in Air, that are bestow'd upon the Dastard, and the Degenerate. *Let the Words of the Preacher then be as Goads to stimulate, and prick them forward, that are dull and slow, to every good Work.* I desire that Fruit may abound, to your Account. *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly.*ⁱ *The liberal Soul shall be made Fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.* So that he who is most beneficent to others, is his own greatest Benefactor. Put on therefore holy and beloved Bowels of Compaffion. Let it be no difficult Thing for me to persuade you to that, which is most conducive to your present and future Advantage. Then whatsoever we shall *plant*, and whosoever shall *Water*, GOD will not fail to give the *Encrease*.

^h *Ephesians i. 11. 17.* ⁱ *Proverbs Chap. xi. ver. 25.*

To you my Countrymen and Brethren belong the *first Honours* of instituting this *Feast*. To you, that *Bath*, through its *Vicinity*, has caught the *Flame*, and that even our *Metropolis* itself begins to *conceive* and *kindle* into a *friendly Blaze*. It will be a *laudable Ambition* in you to maintain the *Ground*, ye have gain'd by *starting first*, and to keep still *foremost* in the *Race of Glory*. So that forgetting the *Things*, that are behind, ye press still forward to the *Mark* of the *high Prize* of your calling. For *you* to faint or flag, would be *inglorious*, where so many of your *Predecessors* have so bravely led the *Way*. Here you may be allow'd to *blow the Trumpet* before you, when ye do *Alms*, to let your *Light* shine before Men, to be as *exemplary* as you can, to draw on others to an *æmulous imitation*, without the *Charge* of *Vain-Glory*, or *Hypocrisy*, where the *Profession* and the *Practice* are both of a *Piece*, and the *Countenance* is only an *Index* of the *Heart*. It is allowable on this *Solemn Occasion* with *Trumpets* and with *Shawms* to shew ourselves joyful before the *Lord the King*, and to make our *Joy* so *diffusive*, as to *Echo* to the *extream*, the *remotest Corners* of our *County*, some of whose *Inhabitants*, perhaps, may have reason to bless *God* to future *Generations*, for the meeting of this *Day*. Labour not too *Sollicitously* for the *Bread* that *perisheth*. Nothing *perisheth* so *effectually*,

as

as that, which is spent in *Luxury* and *Profligacy*; It descendeth into the *Belly*, and from thence into the *Draught*. Let me recommend *frugality* therefore, nay *parimony* in your future Entertainments, that there may be the more abound to the Supply of those that are in *Want*. That which is bestow'd upon the *Indigent* and *Necessitous*, is more our *own* than before we parted with it; is deposited in *Hands*, from whence it never can be *alienated* from us, but will hourly be *accumulating*, out of the *reach* of *Fraud*, or *risk* of *Failure*. For *Heaven* is the *Bank*, and *God* himself the *Security*. Happy, thrice happy, is the *Man*, who has laid up all his *Treasure*, and his *Heart* in a *fund* so safe and inexhaustible, where after all the Changes and Chances of this *Mortal Life* are over, he shall be sure at his coming to *receive his own with Usury*.

HERE then from the *Doctrine* laid down, and the *Example*, exhibited to us, we may in the first Place make this comfortable Observation with the *Apostle*, that *of a Truth God is no respecter of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him*. *Cornelius* was by Birth and Parentage, by Country and Education an *Heathen* and *Idolater*, and so, far, an *Enemy* to *God*, and *Stranger* to the *Covenant*. But *God* who is the great *Searcher of Hearts*, knoweth them that are

his. And our Saviour declares, that *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*
^k But will rather, as in the present Case, Work a *Miracle* for his *Conversion*, than suffer him to pass *unconverted*. But Secondly we may observe, that there is *no Station, or Profession of Life*, which Men may not adorn by a virtuous and religious Deportment *None* that will be admitted as a *Plea or Excuse* to GOD for a *Vicious and Criminal Behaviour*.

CORNELIUS was a *Soldier*; a *Centurion* or *Captain of an Hundred*, of the *Band* called the *Italian*, then in *Garrison at Cæsarea*, at a remote distance from *Rome*, and less liable to be called to Account for his *Conduct or Moral Character in Civil Life*. But yet so far was he from taking Advantage of all this, as to turn it into an Opportunity of doing good with the better Grace, and of shining more conspicuously from the Eminence of his *Virtues* than his *Station*. His Hours of Leisure and Remission from military Duty instead of being spent in Offices of *Lewdness* and *Debauchery* were consecrated to none but *Pious, and Eleemosynary Uses*. His Tongue, an utter Stranger to *Oaths* and *Imprecations*, to *obscene or blasphemous Discourse*, was exercis'd in *Prayer and Praise*, and *Acts of Adoration to the Supreme Being*. His Hands, instead of *Rapine, and Plunder*, were employ'd in *cloathing the Naked, and dealing his Bread to the Hungry*. So that

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we are here sent to the Camp as a *School* of the *purest* Erudition, to learn *Christianity* of an *Heathen*, *Piety* from a *Soldier* and *Works* of *Pity* and *Compassion* from one, whose *Profession* it was to *shed Blood* What may we not learn from *such* a Leader as this. As is the Leader, so is the Follower. A devout Centurion will have a devout Soldier. What a Reform would this make in the Army, were we to begin at the *Head* first, and the *Officer* in *this*, as in *other* Points to shew the *Example*. *Habits of Virtue*, are to be acquir'd by *Exercise*, and *Discipline*, as well as those, which *Outrage* Nature, are *offensive* to *God*, and *shocking* to all *good Men*.

BUT *Cornelius* was not only a *Centurion* by *Command*, but a *Nobleman* by *Blood*. The *Cornelian* was one of the most illustrious Families in *Rome*. It is a *great* Advantage to be *greatly* descended. The *Honours* deriv'd from a long Race of Ancestors *Right Honourable*, raise the Bearer above the *vulgar Standard*, and *simply* demand *Veneration* and *Esteem*; which when improv'd by his own *personal Merit*, and *Acquisition*, shine with *double Splendour*, and make his *Lustre* yet more *illustrious*. *Virtue* is the *only* Source of true Honour. Whatever is derived by any *other* Channel, flows from an *impure* and *muddy Fountain*. It is *that* which *ennobles Nobility* itself, and is the brightest Gem even in the *Imperial Crown*.
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Such *Centurions*, and such *Nobles* are not only an *Ornament*, but a *Bulwark* to their *Country*. They are as *Arrows* in the *Hands* of a *Giant*. Happy is the *Prince*, that hath his *Quiver* full of them: They shall not be ashamed to speak with their *Enemies* in the *Gate*. *This* then is a *Character*, tho' *concise*, yet the *most compleat*, the *highest finisb'd*, that ever *Ambition* itself aspir'd to, being confirmed by unerring *Veracity*, and attested by infinite *Wisdom*. The *Man* to whom *GOD* vouchsafes such high *Marks* of *Favour* here *below*, enjoys *Heaven* by *anticipation*; conceives nought but *Heaven*, breaths nought but *Heaven*. And when the happy *Hour* of his *Enlargement* from this *Prison* of *Clay* is come, shall be attended on his *Flight* upward, as it were by *Relays* of *Angels*, who shall *first* salute him with this *Epinicion*, or *Song* of *Triumph* over *Death*, and the *Grave*, *Ob Death where is thy Sting*; *Ob Grave where is thy Victory*? Which at his *second Stage* shall be revived with a long *Requiem*, or *Song* of *everlasting Repose*. *Blessed are the Dead which die in the LORD*, for they *rest from their Labours*, and their *Works* do *follow them*. To be closed with this *solemn* and *final Peroration*, or *Hymn* of *Intromission* into the *Seats* of *endless Bliss*, *Lift up your Heads, Oh ye Gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors, and the Sons of Glory shall come in.* **DE65**

